

*Comparing Postcolonial Literatures: Dislocations*. Ed. by ASHOK BERRY and PATRICIA MURRAY. Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's Press. 2000. xi+283 pp. £42.50.

Inevitably, perhaps, the first result of reading *Comparing Postcolonial Literatures* is to induce a crushing sense of inadequacy on the part of the reviewer. As the editors note, postcolonial studies have been dominated by a largely Anglophone perspective. Few postcolonialists are fully equipped to deal with a volume which involves the Francophone and Hispanic literatures of the Caribbean and Latin America (Bolivia, Cuba, and the Antilles in particular), a hefty emphasis on Irish questions, plus essays on Scotland, Native-Americans, the psychoanalysis of race, Partition narratives, Keneally's 'Aboriginal' novels, and (in what was originally the keynote address of the 'Border Crossings' conference of which the volume is the product) Wilson Harris on the symbolism of the Furies in relation to the contemporary revenge syndrome. In general terms, the major strength of the book is to combine the crossing of disciplinary, linguistic, and cultural borders with a healthy scepticism about the innate value of border zones, hybridity, migrancy, internal colonizations, inbetweenness, liminality—and all the other related buzzwords of the current postcolonial debate. In this respect two essays deserve to be required reading for any postcolonialist. Gerry Smyth destroys any easy acceptance of fashionable notions of hybridity, arguing that it is hegemonically recuperable, easily absorbed by those with an interest in denying the validity of the discourse of resistance, and offers handy strategic functions as the main point of overlap between postcolonialism and postmodernism. Smith does not fully explore its potential for commodification, but he establishes none the less the role of hybridity as merely a critical rationale for the new phase of global capitalism. Keith Richards raises some related problems, though in a different arena. While my own knowledge of Bolivia is almost as limited as Butch Cassidy's, Richards's essay on this neglected topic tackles important issues, reminding the Anglophone reader that the attraction of creole states in the geopolitical chimera that is Latin America had less to do with radical discursive change than with closer identification with Europe. As Jorge Klor de Alva has reminded us, notions of hybridity in Latin America tend to be harnessed to the maintenance of a workable caste system during the colonial period, and connected with post-independence nation-building programmes.

General issues apart, most of the essays in the volume are squarely based on analyses of individual texts, though with two special emphases: the condition of internal exile experienced by marginalized groups, and the tension between self-representation and representation by others. Contributors range from the well-established (C. L. Innes sparkling on Irish literature, David Richards offering a collage essay on African Modernism in ambiguous homage to Picasso, John Thieme as ably intertextual as ever on the literary staging of creolization in Walcott's early plays) to the relatively unknown (Susan Forsyth, a doctoral candidate, offering a thoughtful analysis of the autobiographical writings of Mary Crow Dog). There is a pleasant absence of jargon (though Willy Maley seems to have only recently discovered the joys of etymology and has a tendency to play sub-Nabokovian wordgolf). Specific topics include an early novella by Yeats (*John Sherman*, 1891), William Trevor, Maurice Leitch, Cristina García, Amrita Pritam, Jesús Urzagasti, Nestor Taboada Terán, René Poppe, Wilson Harris ('Couvade'), and Christopher Okigbo. A particular virtue of the collection is the consideration of American (United States) comparisons, including Nara Araújo highlighting the heterogeneity of the literature of the Cuban-US diaspora, Susan Forsyth on internal colonizations, and Geraldine Stoneham on the interrogative performance of the narrative of nation by Bharati Mukherjee (*Jasmine*) and T. Coraghessan Boyle (*The Tortilla Curtain*).

UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

JUDIE NEWMAN